THE
HISTORIAN
OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

August 2025

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, August 21, 2025. **STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING BEFORE AND AFTER KATRINA. A presentation by Tim Keller, retired Chancery Clerk and County Administrator for Hancock County, from his journal covering 10 days of life from the Emergency Operations Center leading up to and after the landfall of Hurricane Katrina.** ***Reservations are required*** and may be made by calling 228-467-4090. **Please call no later than *noon on Wednesday, August 20,*** to make your reservation. Seating is limited to forty-eight (48) people, and we need to order the correct number of lunches. **Served at noon, lunch is $15.00 for members and $17.00 for nonmembers,** payable at the door. The catering order is submitted on Wednesday at noon prior to the luncheon on Thursday. If you need to cancel your reservation, please call by noon on Wednesday prior to the luncheon if at all possible so that the society does not incur unnecessary expenses. It is catered by Almost Home Catering with Chef Michelle Nichols. The menu for the luncheon this month is hamburger steaks in gravy, garlic butter noodles, Mandarin orange salad, yeast rolls, and almond flavored cupcakes.

The statue of Jean Baptist LeMoyne, Sieur de Bienville faces the Bay of Saint Louis in Tercentenary Park.

TERCENTENARY PARK, 2025

By
Anita Warner

At a spring meeting of the Hancock Chamber of Commerce Beautification Committee, a request was received to review Tercentenary Park (pocket park between Hancock Bank and Cuz's with the statue of Bienville) and advise how it could be improved. The Bay Waveland Garden Club is a member of the chamber and the committee and agreed to do an inspection and provide a plan.

Several members of the garden club are master gardeners, so they spearheaded the project. The park was in a state of disrepair with a number of diseased and dead plants as well as being overgrown with weeds and invasive species. The boards on the pedestal holding Bienville also had been damaged.

While the master gardeners worked on a plan, other members went to the city council to request permission to improve the park. We requested that the city remove the dead plants, replace the boards on the pedestal, and install more water lines so that an irrigation system could be installed as part of the project. Members of the committee met with city officials at the park to review the required work, which was accomplished expeditiously.

Once the removal work was finished, the garden club installed new soil in the beds in preparation

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Eddie Coleman, Editor
Lobrano House Director

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MISSION STATEMENT

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

for the new plants. It was decided to add color to the park with a variety of heritage roses, azaleas, Little Gem Magnolias, and Sweet Olive trees. At the same time, Green Forest Nursery donated two large Yuletide Camellias for the project. We installed plant markers with both the common and Latin names of each plant. And we added a garden bench to match the one in the back. The garden club spent close to $2,000 in the renovation.

We celebrated the completion of the project with a ribbon cutting with the Chamber on June 26, 2025, that was well attended by numerous city and county officials, the Bay-Waveland Garden Club, and members of the Hancock County Historical Society.

WHY IS THE STATUE OF JEAN-BAPTISTE LE MOYNE, SIEUR DE BIENVILLE INCLUDED IN THE PARK?

Original by Charles Gray
(Reprinted from The Historian *of August 1999)*
Currently edited by
Eddie Coleman

On August 25, 1297, Louis IX of France was canonized for leading both the First and Second Crusades into the Holy Land, thus establishing the Feast Day of Saint Louis.

Four hundred and two years later, on August 25, 1699, a small party of French explorers led by Jean-Baptiste LeMoyne, Sieur de Bienville, entered and explored a "beautiful bay" that he named the Bay of Saint Louis.

And now, three hundred years after that historic happening, we will celebrate the event by dedicating a life-size bronze statue of M. Bienville and by opening Tercentenary Park. The statue was sculptured by Mary Ott Davidson, who graduated from Biloxi Catholic schools and Dominican College in New Orleans. She became a nun, and during her training as a nun, she was introduced to photography, painting, and sculpture. She taught in the inner city while working on a graduate degree in art from Tulane University. She then accepted a position teaching in Zurich, Switzerland.

After returning to the United States, she received a second graduate degree from Vermont College of Norwich University before becoming the head of the art department at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Jeff Davis campus.

She sculptured Bienville's older brother, Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur de Iberville, for the city of

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Had one not already experienced a life changing event of epic proportion prior to Katrina, it was a catastrophic event for many. It changed our lives and for some continues to affect our mental or emotional state to this day.

While we may not dwell on disturbing memories, each hurricane season may create a bit of tension in us. Perhaps the angst is not top of mind but dormant in our subconsciousness. When a storm enters the gulf, the tension increases or decreases proportionally to the movement of the disturbance.

When the fall season comes and we have been spared, we experience a feeling of relief as our focus changes to the holiday season and how fortunate we are to live where we do.

Chris Roth
President

Mary Ott Davison finished the statue of Jean-Baptist LeMoyne, Sieur de Bienville.

Members of the Bay Waveland Garden Club attended the reception to honor the new plants at Tercentenary Park

Biloxi. It was he who ordered the construction of Fort Maurepas at Old Biloxi (present-day Ocean Springs) before he returned to France in May 1699. The statue stands near the Biloxi Lighthouse.

We felt it was appropriate to honor the younger Le Moyne brother, Bienville, who remained on the Gulf Coast for the better part of forty-six years. Bienville, after all, founded the cities of Bay Saint Louis, Mobile, "New" Biloxi, and New Orleans.

After work was started on the Bienville statue, Mary agreed to sculpture a crest for the city of Bay Saint Louis as well as bas-relief replicas of *Le Marin* and *La Badine*, d'Iberville's and de Bienville's ships respectively. These three pieces will adorn the columns at the entrance to Tercentenary Park.

THE ORIGIN OF TERCENTENARY PARK

Original by Charles Gray
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Eddie Coleman

Early in 1998, Leo Seal inquired about our plans for the celebration of our 300th anniversary. He mentioned the bronze statue of d'Iberville that was being made for Biloxi's beach and offered use of the park next to Hancock Bank should we decide to have a similar one of d'Iberville's brother, de Bienville, made for Bay Saint Louis. He also offered to pay half the cost of having the statue designed and cast.

When approached on the subject, Mayor Favre and the Bay Saint Louis City Council agreed to assume financial responsibility for the other half. The city and Hancock Bank also agreed to provide [jointly the] necessary labor and materials for the pedestal.

The Historical Society sold granite plaques and bricks for the pedestal surface and for walkways by having them engraved with sponsors' names. It also commissioned the making of the replicas of *Le Marin* and *La Badine* for the two center columns, [the] lanterns for the two outer columns, [and] the crest for the center of the entranceway.

Therefore a special thanks to Leo Seal; Hancock Bank and its directors; Hancock Bank Superintendent Facilities Maintenance David Marshall; Mayor Edward Favre; Councilmen Carleen Murphy Moran, James Thriffiley III, Connie Payne Lampley, Tad Black, and James Rutherford; Public Works Director Ronald Vanney; Bay Saint Louis Cultural Affairs Director Mike Cuevas; Hancock County Supervisors Jeep Ladner, Rocky Pullman, Lisa Cowan, Steve Seymour, and Philip Moran; and Chancery Clerk Tim Kellar. Many thanks.

HOPE IN OUR TIME OF TRIAL AND SORROW

Original by
Charles Gray
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Eddie Coleman

The three hundredth anniversary of the founding of Bay Saint Louis was celebrated in grand style on August 25, 1999, when Tercentenary Park was opened on Beach Boulevard next to the Hancock Bank. The life-size statue of Jean Baptiste LeMoyne, Sieur de Bienville, atop a dozen granite plaques engraved with the names of prominent citizens from the past, dominated the garden. Hundreds of bricks, likewise engraved with sentiments or names, decorated the walkway to the statue.

The gateway was topped with a great arch with the city crest in bronze *bas*-relief, and the flanking columns each had a replica of *Le Marin* and *La Badine*, the ships that brought the explorer/settlers to our shores. The

spears of the iron fence were fleur-de-lis detailed from the flag of France of 1699, and indeed that flag, along with the Stars and Stripes, flew high above the whole park.

Hurricane Katrina reduced the entire park to rubble except for the statue. Much of the granite was broken, and over 160 name bricks simply disappeared in the aftermath of the storm, leaving a scene of despair for us who had worked so hard to create the park.

But, then there came a sunrise, a bright new morning. An incredible group of people from Pennsylvania, primarily Bucks and Montgomery Counties came to help. Vacationing students from Delaware College built a temporary fence, cleaned the debris from the park, turned and fertilized the soil, installed an underground watering system, and planted dozens of plants.

On March 13, 2007, representatives of this group returned and dedicated the million-dollar daycare facility they had built for Hancock County on Highway 603, a new humane society shelter they built later at Port Bienville, and, of course, Tercentenary Park. Among the many people responsible for these accomplishments are Nancy Bergere, Normandy Gack, and Eric Fleischer of Doylestown, Pennsylvania. We will always remember these wonderful friends who sought us out to bring hope in our time of trial and sorrow.

The students on the right with Charles are the ones from Delaware Collage who volunteered to clean up and refresh Tercentenary Park after Hurricane Katrina

These two photos (one on the left and the other on the lower right) show more of the new shrubbery and plants in Tercentenary Park not shown on the photo on page 1.

City Counsel, Bay-Waveland Garden Club, and Hancock County Historical Members Members

Sailing ships much like these were used by d'Iberville and Bienville.

THE VOYAGE OF LE MARIN
EPILOGUE

(The following article was first published in the August 1999 Historian *as part of the dedication of Tercentenary Park. It was written by then Society Historian Edith Back.)*

On March 31, 1699, Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville returned to *Le Marin*, anchored at Ship Island since he and his party had embarked on a month's exploration of the Mississippi River.

The night before, d'Iberville ordered a signal fire to be lit onshore to alert those on the ships of his return. Most scholars agree that the bonfires were set on the bluff of what would later be named Bay St. Louis. After returning to their frigates, the explorers continued the quest for a site for a French settlement.

On April 2, d'Iberville and d'Sauvolle, in small vessels called feluccas, made soundings along the coast. They visited a bay about nine leagues from Ship Island (the Bay of St. Louis). They liked the appearance of the bay with a bluff thirty-one feet above sea level, but the waters were too shallow for the frigates to approach shore.

Soundings continued along the entire Coast from the Pearl to the Pascagoula Rivers and the Bay of Biloxi in search of water deep enough for the larger vessels.

Finally, on April 7, they found a seven-foot channel on Biloxi Bay and chose the bluff on the eastern shore for their fort, even though the frigates would have to remain at Ship Island and transfer cargoes to smaller vessels to unload at the site.

Construction began [on] April 8, and the fort was completed [on] May 1. Two days later, d'Iberville, having accomplished his mission, left for France, leaving d'Sauvolle as commander at Fort Biloxi and other officers, including his brother, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, in charge.

On August 25, Bienville left Biloxi to explore the lake route to the Mississippi River. His ship's carpenter, Andre Joseph Penicault, who chronicled the voyage, wrote of the arrival at Bay St. Louis:

"We shortly afterward found a beautiful bay, about one league in width, by four in circumference, which M. Bienville named The Bay of St. Louis, because it was the day of St. Louis that we arrived there."

Aided by Indian guides, Bienville followed the shore through lakes and passes, including Heron Pass (now called Grande Isle Pass), and then leaving the sea, the explorers camped on an island they called Isle au Pois (Pea Island) because a sack of peas had been left there. They departed before daylight "on account of the small flies or Cousins, which the Indians call Maringouins [mosquitoes]...which puncture the skin quite savagely, even to the drawing of blood" according to Penicault.

"We shortly after entered a pass or strait which we called the Rigolets [drains], which led to a lake….We called it Pointe aux Coquilles [shells], and the broad lake it contacted had already been named by M. d'Iberville, 'Pontchartrain.'"

After further explorations, as far as the Tangipahoa River, the group returned to Pea Island, and the next day passed through some small passes that led to the sea three leagues away near St. Louis Bay.

"We camped at the entrance to the Bay, near a fountain of water that flows from the hills, which M. de Bienville named Belle Fountaine." A map by d'Anville, titled Carte de la Louisiane, shows a fountain [spring or small creek] near the site of today's Bay St. Louis and is believed to be where Bookter Street is today. "We hunted several days on the shores of this bay. We filled our boats with the venison and buffalo that we killed, and next day brought them to our fort," Pericault reported.

In December one sergeant and fifteen men were placed at the settlement in a small fort near where the Toulme mansion once stood on the beach between Carroll Avenue and de Montluzin Street.

"There is no record of the reason for establishing this fort," said historian Robert G. Scharff, "but the copious supply of game at the Bay of St. Louis and the near starvation conditions that prevailed at Biloxi suggest that it may have been established as a hunting and trading post, [sic] to help provision the settlement at Biloxi."

By the early 1700's the French were established in a small fort on the Pearl River and in the settlement at the Bay of St. Louis. On January 5, 1702, the Biloxi settlement was moved to Mobile by order of the French government. It is believed that the forts at the Bay of St. Louis and the Pearl River were no longer needed and were abandoned and their personnel, like those at Biloxi, moved to a new location. No further accounts have been found about these outposts. Not only did the French leave the

Hancock County area, but the Acolapissa Indians, to protect themselves from slave raids, moved in 1702 to a fortified location north of Lake Pontchartrain.

The population of the county began to grow after the Louisiana Purchase by the United States government in 1803 with settlers moving west from the eastern shore of the new nation. In the latter part of the 19th Century, growth of Bay St. Louis was stimulated by the invention of the steamboat and extension of the railroad, bringing visitors and settlers from New Orleans, seeking relief from heat and yellow fever epidemics as well as recreation and prosperity from economic opportunities in the lumber and seafood industries in fast-growing Mississippi Coast communities.

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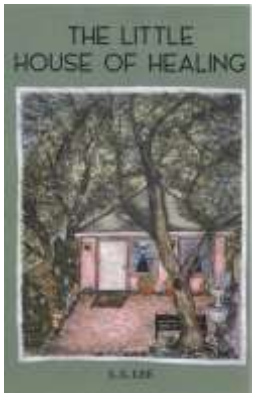

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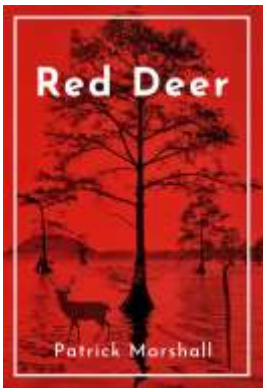

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